

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT VALLETTA 0727 ACTION SECSTATE AND
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT. MAR 31.

QUOTE: UNCLAS VALLETTA 00727

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SUBJECT: PRESS INTERVIEW QUOTING ADMIRAL SHEAR

1. TIMES OF MALTA AND SEVERAL (NATIONALIST PARTY ORIENTED)
MALTESE LANGUAGE PAPERS HAVE GIVEN PROMINENCE TO REPORT
THIS WEEK FROM NAPLES QUOTING ADMIRAL SHEAR IN INTERVIEW
UNDER CAPTION "THE WEST MUST HELP MALTA, WARNS NATO
ADMIRAL".
2. TEXT OF ARTICLE FOLLOWS: BEGIN QUOTE "UNLESS THE WEST
CONTINUES TO SUSTAIN THE ECONOMY OF THE ISLAND, SOVIETS
AND LIBYANS WILL HELP THE MINTOFF GOVERNMENT". THE WARNING
WAS GIVEN BY ADMIRAL HAROLD SHEAR, HEAD OF THE ALLIED
FORCES IN SOUTHERN EUROPE, IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE
"MALTANAPOLI", JANUARY/MARCH 1978 ISSUE, UNDER THE HEADING
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"L'OCCIDENTE DEVE AIUTARE MALTA" (THE WEST MUST HELP
MALTA).

ACCORDING TO ADMIRAL SHEAR, MALTA'S DECISION TO END
THE BRITISH MILITARY PRESENCE NEXT YEAR IS A REASON FOR
PREOCCUPATION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN CHESS-BOARD. "MALTA,
ALREADY A DEFENSIVE BASTION FOR THE WEST, IS SLIDING

TOWARDS NEUTRALITY AND MAINTAINING CLOSE RELATIONS WITH LIBYA".

"MALTA WILL HAVE GREAT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE LAST BRITISH CONTINGENTS NEXT YEAR. IF THE WEST DOES NOT CONTINUE, IN SOME WAY, TO SUSTAIN THE ECONOMY OF THE ISLAND, I CAN IMAGINE THAT THE SOVIETS AND THE LIBYANS TOGETHER WILL OFFER TO THE MINTOFF GOVERNMENT THEIR PACKET OF AID SO ALLURING AS TO MAKE IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO REFUSE", ADDED ADMIRAL SHEAR.

FOR N.A.T.O. TO HAVE A BASE IN MALTA WOULD BE A GOOD THING BUT NOT ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL, AS SICILY IS SO NEAR. "BUT IT WOULD BE GRAVE IF THE SOVIETS AND LIBYANS WERE TO INSTALL THEMSELVES AT MALTA AND AVAIL THEMSELVES OF WHAT IT HAS TO OFFER (A MAGNIFICENT NAVAL DOCKYARD, GOOD HARBOURS, AN EXCELLENT AIRPORT AND OIL DEPOSITS (SIC)", THE ADMIRAL ADDED.

THE ADMIRAL MAINTAINED THAT THE SOVIET WARSHIPS CURRENTLY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN ARE ABOUT 40. THE WEST, HOWEVER, PRESERVES THE MAJORITY THANKS TO THE PRESENCE OF THE ITALIAN NAVY, IN A SMALLER MEASURE TO THAT OF TURKEY AND THE ALLIANCE'S AIRCRAFT CARRIERS,

THE ONLY SOVIET AIRCRAFT CARRIER, THE "KIEV", HAS UNCLASSIFIED

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RETURNED TO RUSSIA, BUT THE N.A.T.O. EXPERTS MAINTAIN THAT ITS RECALL IS ONLY TEMPORARY AND DOES NOT SIGNIFY THE SOVIET'S RENUNCIATION TO HAVE THIS TYPE OF SHIP IN A SEA WHICH MOSCOW LOVES.

ADMIRAL SHEAR, IN HIS INTERVIEW, ALSO SPOKE ON THE SOVIET'S HELP TO ETHIOPIA AND THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE DISPUTE BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE REGARDING CYPRUS AND OIL EXPLORATION IN THE AEGEAN. END QUOTE.

3. COMMENT: INTERVIEW AS PLAYED HERE COULD HAVE SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR TACTICAL AND POLICY APPROACH TOWARD POST-1979 MALTA. LAINGEN UNQUOTE VANCE

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